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ABSTRACT

Summaries are provided for the major presentations given at a workshop on honors, transfer, and excellence, held in Los Angeles in October 1982. Following a brief overview of the main topics covered, highlights are presented from the talks of: (1) Robert McCabe, president of Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC), who urged participants to set high expectations of students in order to achieve the objectives of access and excellence and reviewed MDCC's efforts to tighten academic standards, increase college involvement, and stress generic skills to prepare students for work; (2) John Maguire, president of the Claremont University Center and Graduate School, who discussed the need to strengthen articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year colleges through better information, communication, counseling, and attitudes; and (3) a panel of leaders from six community college districts who discussed transfer and honors programs in the MDCC District, the City Colleges of Chicago, the Dallas Community College District, the St. Louis Community College District, the Maricopa Community College District, and the Los Angeles Community College District. Summaries are then presented of discussions dealing with the importance of publicizing excellence in community college transfer programs, faculty issues, and statewide articulation agreements. Concluding remarks by Arthur Cohen and Florence Brawer synthesize the major workshop themes. (LL)

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HIGHLIGHTING THE TRANSFER, HONORS, AND EXCELLENCE WORKSHOP

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BULLETIN

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Highlighting The Transfer, Honors, And Excellence Workshop

"Who is a qualified employee? Someone who can read, write, and process data and information. Thus, the most important vocational skills are those taught in the academic part of the college." That statement by Robert McCabe, President of Miami-Dade Community College, set the tone for the workshop on Honors, Transfer, and Excellence held at Los Angeles Harbor College on October 28. The 110 participants in the workshop, co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges and the Los Angeles Community College District also heard McCabe warn that many people are attacking the community college and are saying that the open door does not work and it is not a good concept. One of the reasons these critics are able to find support for their argument is that community college educators have done things in the past that have left us in a vulnerable position.

John Maguire, President of Claremont University Center and Claremont Graduate School, also presented a major address at the workshop and Arthur M. Cohen, President of the Center for Study of Community Colleges, summarized the proceedings. Leslie Koltai, Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District, opened the meeting with an appeal on behalf of the liberal arts, saying that if the community colleges are to remain true to their mission they must not allow the transfer function to become subordinate to other studies. And Florence Brawer, Research Director of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, who organized the meeting remarked on the importance of maintaining college-level education in the face of the decline in academic preparation exhibited by entering students. Their views, along with those of the other speakers at the workshop, are highlighted in this issue of the **Bulletin**.

Excellence Is For Everyone

Changes are in order. The open door is not going to survive as an open flow, do-your-own-thing approach. It can only survive if community college educators are able to show that the full-spread of people served are able to achieve. President McCabe urged that we set high expectations in order to save the open door and to achieve the objectives of both access and excellence. Community colleges must change from institutions that offered people the right to fail to institutions that do everything possible to help people succeed. This will require the institutions to be more structured, more directive, more supportive, and more demanding.

Achieving Excellence

Workshop participants learned about the work that Miami-Dade has done to convert the district into an educational system. Procedures to tighten academic standards have been installed; the curriculum within the liberal arts, general education areas has been rebuilt; and sets of interdisciplinary general education courses that all students must take have been established: one each in sciences, social science, humanities, and communications. Placement testing is done at entry to the college and students are steered to appropriate courses. Along these lines, admission to specialized courses is restricted until after students have taken the interdisciplinary courses prerequisite to those specialized courses. And standards of academic progress are imposed, stating that those students not making satisfactory progress toward a degree or certificate will be put on probation and eventual-

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ly suspended. Support services have been integrated with the curriculum, and through the student information systems, students are provided with information about their progress in their courses and programs, and a listing of courses needed for completion before entering four-year colleges and universities in the state of Florida.

College Involvement, Generic Skills, And Preparing Students

Student and faculty involvement must be increased. One of the problems faced by urban community colleges is that both students and staff can drive to college, go to class, and drive away. McCabe pointed to the need to devise ways of insuring that students become involved with the faculty and the people who work in the college. Miami-Dade is trying to promote greater involvement through requiring students to see a counselor at least once a year, involving faculty in the advisement process, and requiring all disciplinary departments to provide helping services for students experiencing academic difficulties.

"We are evolving into a society in which the predominance of employment will be in jobs that require strong generic academic skills—reading, writing, communicating, mathematics, and interpreting information and data. Thus, the most important vocational skills are those taught in the academic part of the college." Continuing with this same theme, McCabe observed that "the trend in service industries and office industries is for qualified employees. Who is a qualified employee? Someone who can read, write, and process data and information." Until June 1982, despite all the talk of unemployment, the number of unfulfilled jobs had been increasing for a 24 month period. Why? Because the available jobs were in areas that require strong academic skills.

Today people have fewer skills coming into community colleges at the same time that they need more skills upon exit. The skills and competencies people had in 1970 are not good enough for today or for the future. In order to meet this challenge, we will have to create an environment in which we say to students that we know best, we know the direction, we know what will help you. "What this nation needs is a community college system that is devoted to the idea of excellence for everyone."

Improving Articulation Agreements

President John Maguire of the Claremont University Center and Graduate School discussed the need to improve articulation agreements between the public community colleges and the private four-year colleges and universities. Characterizing the transfer situation between public and private institutions as "abysmal," Maguire noted that "if we look at the whole system of higher education, the sector that is most open at the outset of the junior year to community college transfers is not the sister public institutions but rather the private sector for both good and questionable reasons." The private sector, with its high tuition, desperately needs enrollments but it is also a sector that has far more financial aid available to community college transfer students than is taken. Many private colleges and universities have institutionally controlled financial aids (as opposed to state and federal money) set aside for community college transfer students that are not used.

Maguire listed five reasons for what he termed the abysmal situation with regard to transfer. (1) At too many community colleges, the institutional message of being a sender of students to four-year colleges and universities gets obscured. (2) The sector that is most capable of receiving the largest number of transfers is the least utilized—namely the independent colleges and universities. Historically, the poorest fit of all has been between public community colleges and private or independent four-year colleges or universities. (3) The first two years of course work taken in community colleges are rarely designed to fit naturally into years three and four. This is due in part to the poor or nonexistent communication between faculty members in the public community colleges and those in the private four-year institutions. (4) Community college students, counselors, and faculty members typically are not aware of the opportunities for financial aid that are available at private institutions. Paradoxically, the more selective and prestigious the institution, the more financial aid it has available for students who are prepared to claim it. And (5) the major obstacle to fashioning an articulation system is simply attitude, stereotype, and perception. The stereotype on the part of faculty at selective colleges is that the community college curriculum is not up to speed, so therefore its graduates couldn't possibly be prepared for the quality of work that is demanded at their institutions. The attitude and perception of staff at community colleges is that private colleges are too expensive and elitist for most of their students.

Strengthening Articulation

Better information

At the top of Maguire's list of prescriptions for strengthening articulation between public community colleges and private four-year colleges and universities is better information. The receiving institutions need to supply better information to the sending institutions and the senders need to know how to use the information. Having good information would facilitate answers to such essential questions as: How many students really want to transfer? How many students have the potential to transfer? How many students are being frustrated and denied the opportunity to continue their education beyond grade thirteen or fourteen? How many people really want to transfer but for a variety of reasons cannot? Maguire recommended that community college staff identify as early as possible the people who enter their institutions and who really want to go on to earn a baccalaureate degree. These students must be encouraged and supported in every way possible.

Better articulation agreements

The public and private postsecondary education sectors need to start planning the fit between lower-division and upper-division programs, institution by institution, faculty by faculty, across institutions. The goal of these articulation agreements would be to

guarantee full credit acceptability of the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science Degrees. In that way, students could succeed in four additional semesters to complete the baccalaureate degree.

Better communication

This must be established not only about curriculum but also about financial aid. Students and counselors must be made aware of the funds available for community college graduates in private four-year institutions.

Better counseling

This presupposes better information and more outreach on the part of counselors. At the time they start their college work in the two-year sector, students must be told of the requirements needed to enter a particular four-year institution at the junior year.

Better attitudes

Changing the attitudes of staff toward different post-secondary education segments is "a tough nut to crack." Faculty at independent colleges must get over the attitude that community college transfers are not as bright as those students who have chosen to enter their institutions as freshmen. Faculty at four-year institutions need to examine and study community college curriculum. They need to ask the question: Is the community college curriculum designed to facilitate and promote going on to four-year institutions?" At the same time, community college faculty and administrators need to realize that most, if not all, independent private colleges both want and need community college transfer students.

Value of College Degree

Responding to a question regarding the reason that community colleges should stress the transfer function, Maguire stated that higher education is still the road to success for most people in American life. The purpose of education is empowerment through the acquisition of knowledge and skills. As people become more streetwise and become more aware of how the system operates, many more community college students will want to go on to four-year institutions.

Efforts To Promote Excellence In Districts

With Jeffrey Lukenbill, Director of Miami-Dade's General Education project as moderator, a panel comprised of leaders from the six districts discussed transfer, honors, and excellence in their institutions. Don Barshis, Dean of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning at the City Colleges of Chicago, described how academic support services have been built as integral parts of the courses. Rather than offer student support services as separate programs, they have led the way in showing how those necessary learning activities can be built into the courses themselves.

Jan LeCroy, Chancellor of the Dallas Community College District, commented that his educational institution is committed to the ideas of transfer, excellence and flow through to program completion. His staff has been working to define the competencies essential to the educated person and they are taking steps to shape the entire institution as an educational system that has demonstrable impact on its matriculants.

Steve Curtis, St. Louis District Facilitator and music chairperson, spoke about the attempt to build program identification in his college. He deplored the fact that few people who enroll in the transfer courses know that they are in a program; they attend class and leave without realizing that each course is supposed to build on the other, that the entire program is directed toward moving them through to completing a degree or certificate.

Commenting on the need to entice the best students into the colleges, George Emerson, Director of Honors Programs at Miami-Dade, noted that the institutions can no longer afford to send out the message, "This is a place for failures or the ones who can't make it to a real college." He spoke about Miami-Dade Community College's attempt to attract the top students by offering scholarships to them.

Alfredo de los Santos, Vice Chancellor of the Maricopa Community College District, emphasized the importance of defining the competencies expected of students who would enter a transfer credit course. He said that we can no longer let people wander in to class at will and assume that the faculty can teach to a room full of people whose academic skills range from poor to excellent.

Kenneth Washington, Vice Chancellor, Education Services, Los Angeles Community College District, spoke about the importance of strengthening the transfer function for the sake of the minority students in the institutions. The community college has extended a promise to minority group members and it must fulfill that promise. If they are led on a divergent track that keeps them from gaining access to a higher education and top status careers, they have been cruelly denied. Access to nothing of importance is not access at all.

Implementing Programs To Promote Excellence

Three discussion groups dealt with issues concerning the implementation of programs to promote excellence in community colleges. The discussion in the group headed by Jack Fujimoto, President of West Los Angeles College, centered on the importance of publicizing the fact that most community colleges maintain excellent transfer programs and provide special opportunities for honors students.

Participants in this group felt that the general public seems not to notice that good education is still available in the community colleges. That is probably the result of the image that was created during the 60's and 70's when community colleges were concerned more with access than achievement. There is a question of image and it will take much to change it. Group members stated that this transformation must involve recruitment of outstanding high-school students, incentives and rewards for excellence in instruction, and the commitment of funds to promote excellence within the districts.

The group discussing faculty issues was chaired by Jerrold Novotney, Dean, Center for Professional Development, Los Angeles Community College District. Observing that speaking of excellence is one thing, defining it is another, the participants

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tackled such issues as How do you define an honors program? How do you define who shall enter an honors program, students and faculty alike? Is the difference between honors and regular courses one of teaching methods or is it a difference in content? As Novotney put it, "Are standards in the honors program defined in the context of the institution or as they relate to the transferring institution?" Important questions all, and district-wide and college-wide task forces as well as individual departments and instructors will be considering them.

Jack Friedlander, Staff Associate of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, chaired the third group which concentrated on the need for better state-wide articulation agreements, and the need for instructors at community college and senior institution levels to understand programs at each others' colleges. That type of understanding could be fostered through faculty exchanges since faculty at independent four-year institutions need to understand community college students.

The participants further remarked about differences in educational patterns that reach far beyond an institution that welcomes students with financial aid. For example, many four-year institutions discourage community college students from attending by not permitting part-time enrollment, not offering a full complement of evening courses, and in some instances, requiring students to live on campus. The receiving institution must assume the responsibility of arranging procedures to orient, accommodate, and support students transferring from community colleges, and also, to send back to the college counselors information about the students' experiences at the transfer institution. This information, so essential for program planning and evaluation, too often gets lost.

Nationwide Efforts To Strengthen Transfer Education

In summarizing the day's events, Arthur M. Cohen, President of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, noted that "a nationwide systematic push in the direction of shaping community colleges to transfer institutions once again is underway." Evidence of this movement toward strengthening the transfer function can be seen through changes in financial aid requirements, attempts to define outcomes for courses and programs, the implementation of statewide course numbering systems for facilitating student transfer among institutions, and mandating end-of-sophomore year tests, such as Florida has recently introduced. According to Cohen, the days are over when community colleges could merely rearrange course numbering and grading systems and shove all the students through the system. "The colleges are now in an era when expectations for students entering, attending, and leaving will be spelled out. They are in a period when their transfer students must meet certain expectations, take tests, attend classes, write papers, and conduct themselves as college students." This is a move away from the concept of the community college as an adult education center, a move toward shaping it once again as an element in the system of graded education.

However, it will take a lot to move the community college back in the direction of a transfer institution. It will mean better information systems, knowing exactly what is happening to students at each step of the way along their path through the institution and into the senior colleges. It will also mean enforcing prerequisites which many schools have not been doing. Indeed, Center data show that 85 percent of the enrollments in humanities courses in community colleges are in courses for which there are no prerequisites, and 80 percent of the enrollments in the social sciences are in courses without prerequisites. The faculty will have to work hard to shape their courses in sequence so that one fits to the other.

Suggesting that transfer programs be shaped along the model of the most successful occupational education programs. Cohen urged that selective entry be established along with enforced course prerequisites, required courses, course sequence, student support systems integrated with the courses themselves, and mandatory entry and exit testing.

Along with Presidents McCabe and Maguire, Cohen believes that community colleges can have both access and excellence. Enforcing advanced registration, class attendance, testing activities, course sequence, and defined outcomes do not deny access. The institution that would be part of the mainstream of higher education must have standards of excellence within it. The issue is not excellence versus students' need to work. Students can maintain jobs and still be required to meet with counselors to plan their programs, still be required to take pass examinations, still be required to take courses in sequence. And although this structuring of the institution may increase the time required to complete programs, most students will benefit from the demands.

Future Directions

Looking to the future, Florence Brawer thanked Chancellor Koltai for his statements on behalf of the liberal arts and outlined several recommendations being advanced by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges for strengthening the transfer dimension. The Center is advocating that colleges develop citizens advisory committees to the liberal arts, more articulation with the high schools, more recruitment of promising students, more communication of the idea that the collegiate courses in the community colleges are alive and well. Integrated support systems with academic courses is another recommendation. Brawer believes that rather than sidetracking students into separate remedial areas, students could be allowed into the transfer courses and be required to attend a learning laboratory sequence that is keyed directly to those courses. "The science courses have always had lecture sections and laboratory sections; you can have transfer courses in other areas with mandatory academic laboratory attendance."

The Center is also advocating that community colleges provide their students with accurate, up-to-date graduation and transfer information, define standards of academic progress, enforce course sequence, and reshape the college as a transfer institution. That is something that the college leaders of the 1980s will seek to accomplish.

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